

English 111: Victorian Novel Research Seminar

- semester: Spring 2019
 - class meeting time: F 12-4 (occasionally ending at 3:30)
 - seminar outline meeting time: Friday, 10:30 am
 - location: LPAC 201
 - instructor: Rachel Sagner Buurma
 - email: rbuurma1@swarthmore.edu
 - office: LPAC 302 (English Department) + Parrish W201 (Aydelotte Foundation)
 - office hours: W 1-3 in Parrish W201 and by appointment
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Replacing “How something is made, with a view to finding out what it is” with “How something is made, with a view to making it again” – the Essence with the Preparation – is linked to an option that’s completely antiscientific: in reality, the starting point of the Fantasy [of the critic’s writing a novel] isn’t the Novel (in general, as a genre), but one or two novels out of thousands. –Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, Session of December 9, 1978, 13.

This research-intensive honors seminar centers around two simple central questions: *How are Victorian novels made?* and *How is scholarship about Victorian novels made?* We will focus on the Victorian novel as both a genre and a material object, examining it within the context of the broader world of Victorian literature and culture in order to examine the ways in which the Victorian novel was both product and producer of its historical moment. We will explore the possibilities for rethinking canonical twentieth-century theories of novelistic realism, following a recent flourishing in Victorianist criticism on referentiality in order to ask how Victorian novels may be said to refer to the real worlds their authors and readers inhabited. In order to study this theoretical question, we will turn to the set of practices and processes through which Victorian novelists gathered the things of the world into their novels: research. Reading several major and minor Victorian novels, we will trace different forms of evidence of the ways their authors searched sets of documents, took notes, and organized information to perform research of all kinds in the library and on the streets. We will examine the published and unpublished commonplace books, notecards, papers, files, and marginalia of Victorian novelists both canonical and forgotten along with published descriptions of these novelists’ research practices and their representations of research in the novels they wrote. We will engage with criticism and theory from a number of fields, including book history, theories of materiality, historicisms old and new, theories of narrative and realism, genetic and textual criticisms, bibliometrics, media history, and digital humanities.

This class will help you develop our skills in research in print, digital, and

manuscript or typescript sources; how to use and evaluate a range of databases and digital tools; how to think about citation practices as substantive and central to our work as scholars of literature. It will ask you to examine your own implicit and explicit research practices and habits, and (in some cases) to experiment with modifying them or developing new ones. We may incorporate various computational elements into our work, from the basics of plain-text authoring, citation management, and keeping an open research notebook to using digital tools to help us analyze individual novels and groups of novels.

Schedule

Week 1, January 25: Introduction

some topics: canon and archive; roman fleuve; Trollope biography; mid-Victorian publishing, politics, religion; liberals and conservatives

- Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers*
- Anthony Trollope, *The Last Chronicle of Barchester*
- close reading the novel; what is a novel?
- syllabus review
- canonicity and representativeness: why THESE novels? T.S. Eliot Victorian Literature syllabus Leah Price Victorian Novel syllabus, The Open Syllabus Project, Metacanon

Week 2, February 1: canonical realisms 1

some topics: novel theory; realism overview; social networks; city and country; print circulation; news and gossip; series and seriality; status and class; precarity

- Anthony Trollope, *Barchester Towers* and *The Last Chronicle*, continued
- – Trollope, from *An Autobiography* (skim; read sections related to Barsetshire and last chapter)
- Georg Lukacs, Part 1 of *The Theory of the Novel* (longish)
- Ian Watt, from *The Rise of the Novel* (short)
- Roland Barthes, “The Reality Effect” (and handout explaining Saussure)
- Michel Foucault, from *Discipline and Punish* (background to Miller, not central, pretty much optional)
- D.A. Miller, Barchester Towers chapter from *The Novel and the Police*
- Mary Poovey on the Barsetshire series
- complete before class: Dennis Tenen and Grant Wythoff’s plain-text authoring tutorial
- create a Github account

- take a look at P.J. Trainor and the Fall 2016 Victorian Seminar's Barsetshire without borders visualization
- discussion and outline: Laura and Keton
- close reading: Hali
- criticism summary: Sagnik
- seminar paper: Keton
- break: anyone?

Week 3, February 8: canonical realisms 2

some topics: roman fleuve; religion and the clergy; marriage; travel; Trollope and/vs Oliphant; comparison; gender and character; carrying over from week 2 especially series and seriality; status and class; precarity

- Margaret Oliphant, *Miss Marjoribanks* (1866), through chapter 26 (about half)
- Fredric Jameson, "The Realist Floor-plan"
- Bruno Latour, "Circulating Reference"
- VLC Keywords (various)
- discussion and outline: Hali and Sagnik
- close reading: Laura
- criticism summary: Keton
- seminar paper:
- break:

Week 4, February 17 (note: Sunday afternoon): canonical realisms 2

some topics: serials and series (what happens when we try to imagine all six Barsetshire novels or the Carlingford novels as part of a single world?); roman fleuve; marriage; travel; Trollope and/vs Oliphant; comparison; gender and character; carrying over from week 2 especially series and seriality; status and class; precarity

- *Miss Marjoribanks* (1865-6), second half
- Lauren Goodlad, "Bigger Love"
- Eric Hayot, from *On Literary Worlds*
- discussion and outline: Laura

- close reading: Keton
- criticism summary: Keton
- seminar paper: Sagnik, Hali
- break:

Week 5, February 22: Oliphant, continued

some topics:

- Margaret Oliphant, “The Rector” and “The Executor”
- Margaret Oliphant, *An Autobiography*
- Dorrit Cohn, summary handout and selection from *Transparent Minds*
- Lit Lab Canon/Archive pamphlet
- Elson, Dames, McKeown, Extracting Social Networks from Literary Fiction
- discussion and outline: Keton
- close reading: Laura, Sagnik
- criticism summary: Hali
- seminar paper:
- break:

February 28: Patricia Matthew talk

Week 6, March 1: reference

- Charlotte Bronte, *Villette* (first half)
- Mikhail Bakhtin, from “Discourse in the Novel,” 259-331
- Mikhail Bakhtin, from “Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics,” p 5-8 and skim for examples of polyphony
- Joseph Boone, “Depolicing Villette”
- Ted Underwood, David Bamman, and Sabrina Lee, The Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction and
- take a look at the data and code for above article: <https://github.com/tedunderwood/character>
- including this browsable interface that lets you explore the gendering of specific words: <https://github.com/tedunderwood/character>
- SHS paper assigned
- discussion and outline: Laura

- close reading: Hali
- criticism summary: Sagnik
- seminar paper:
- break:

March 6: SHS paper plans due

March 7: SHS paper conferences

Week 7, March 8:

- Charlotte Bronte, *Villette* (second half)
- E.S. Dallas review of OMF
- Karl Marx on commodity fetishism
- Sarah Winter, “Learning by Heart in Our Mutual Friend”
- discussion and outline: Hali
- close reading: Sagnik
- criticism summary: Sagnik, Laura
- seminar paper: Keton
- break: Keton

Week 8, March 15: spring break - read *Hard Cash* (1863)

Week 9, March 22: indexing, knowledge org, research

some topics: indexing, cataloging, classifying, social problem novel, prison, asylum, investigative journalism; index, database vs personal knowledge base; Charles Reade’s open research notebook; returning to canon questions

Trip to Princeton’s Firestone Library this week

- Charles Reade, *Hard Cash*, to end
- Ann Blair, “Note-taking as Information Management” from *Too Much to Know*
- Mary Poovey, “Forgotten Writers, Neglected Histories”
- – Simon Reader, “Victorian Notebooks: Source and Method”
- Henry Wheatley, from *What is an Index?* (skim)

- description of fictional novelist-researcher Rolfe from *A Terrible Temptation*
- bring back: Simon Reader, “Victorian Notebooks: Source and Method”
- Michel Foucault, “Classifying,” from *The Order of Things*
- Charles Bankson, edition of Charles Reade’s notecards
- discussion and outline: Sagnik
- close reading: Laura
- criticism summary: Hali
- seminar paper: Keton, Sagnik
- break:

March ???: SHS paper rough draft due

Week 10, March 29:

some topics: marriage plots, sensation, empire, global print circulation

- Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Rajmohan’s Wife* (1864)
- Sukanya Banerjee, “Troubling Conjugal Loyalties: The First Indian Novel in English and the Transimperial Framework of Sensation.”
- Priya Joshi, *In Another Country* chapters 2,3,4
- add something on the rebellion
- return to Roland Barthes, “The Reality Effect”
- selections from Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*
- Stanford Lit Lab Pamphlet 11
- Kramnick, from *Paper Minds* or Auyoung from *When Fiction Feels Real*
- question: canon, archive, corpus: how do we think about all the novels?
- discussion and outline: Sagnik
- close reading: Sagnik
- criticism summary: Laura
- seminar paper: Hali
- break: Laura

April 5: SHS paper workshop

- Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, first half
- in-class SHS workshop
- break: Sagnik

April 12: search and research

some topics: sensation novel, gender and sexuality

- Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), finish
- Ted Underwood, "Theorizing Research Practices We Forgot to Theorize Twenty Years Ago"*
- tba
- tba
- project work?
- discussion and outline:
- close reading: Keton
- criticism summary: Hali
- seminar paper: Sagnik
- break: Hali

April 19: reference and everyday life

- George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871-2), first half
- Leah Price, from *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel* *
- David Kurnick, "An Erotics of Detachment"
- selections from GE notebooks
- discussion and outline: Hali
- close reading: Hali, Keton
- criticism summary: Laura
- seminar paper:
- break: Keton and Laura

April ???: SHS papers due

April 26: social totalities and literary values

- George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, second half
- George Eliot, “The Natural History of German Life”
- Pre-printed forms (examples of Lett’s Extract Book, Todd’s Index Rerum, etc)
- Sarah Allison, “George Eliot’s Discerning Syntax”
- Introduction to “Denotative, Technically, Literally” special issue, ed. Elaine Freedgood and Cannon Schmitt, *Representations* 125 (Winter

2014)

- discussion and outline: Keton
- close reading: Sagnik
- criticism summary: Keton
- seminar paper: Hali
- break: Sagnik and Hali

May 3: wrap-up: class rescheduled for day of seminar dinner

some topics:

- *Middlemarch*, finish
- examine Quarry for *Middlemarch*
- discussion and outline:

seminar dinner to be scheduled

April ??th SHS papers due

final meeting and seminar dinner

May 20-22 honors

Assignments

Outline and discussion facilitation

Every other week you will be responsible – in pairs - for facilitating discussion of the week’s material, including (but not at all limited to) all readings, seminar papers, close readings, critical summaries, and research exercises. Please plan to read the week’s materials, come up with a draft of the outline (in informal consultation with other seminar members if you like), and post your draft outline by Thursday at 7 pm to our outline site (more on which in class). On Thursday evening, the rest of the seminar members will access the outline and may add

their own suggestions. Then on Friday at 10:30 am the discussion leaders will meet with me briefly in order strategize and finalize the outline. I will then provide copies for use in class. We can certainly diverge from this outline, but it is useful for us to have a general map of how you imagine the shape of the discussion might unfold. The outline is an interesting genre in and of itself; we'll talk about its limitations and possibilities, its uses as a preparation for class, as a map during class, and as an enduring artifact after class is over. I can provide examples from past seminars if you wish. The outline is also (unlike your seminar papers, close readings, and criticism summaries) a public document, which we will likely share in some form. We will format all outlines in Markdown and use Pandoc to convert them into PDF for to print for reference during seminar.

Seminar papers

You will write three 1500-2500 word (3-4 page single-spaced) seminar papers over the course of the semester; they are due to our seminar Dropbox (more on which in class) by 7 pm the Wednesday before seminar. The seminar paper should usually (although this is a guideline not a requirement) engage with at least one novel – making sure to include at least some close reading of the novel - and one piece of criticism. I also encourage you to bring in outside reading that seems relevant (though make sure that you do this in a way that is attentive to the fact that the rest of us will likely not have read your additional text(s)).

Close readings

You will write three 1-2-page single-spaced close readings of a few sentences or a paragraph of one of our fictional texts over the course of the semester; they are due to our seminar Dropbox (more on which in class) by 7 pm the Wednesday before seminar.

Criticism summaries

You will write three 1-2 page (single-spaced) summaries of critical readings; like the seminar papers and close readings, they are due as PDFs or Word attachments by 7 pm the Wednesday before seminar. These should usually include a brief paragraph on the main claim and stakes of the reading, a more detailed overview of the argument, a note if relevant on the writer's style, feeling, and tone, and particular mention (with page numbers) of points/passages you think are especially important for our purposes and/or require our critique. See handout on “reading criticism” for guidance if you like.

Research notes

This is a research intensive seminar. By “research intensive,” I mean that in addition to reading and responding to the texts included on the syllabus

according to the terms and questions I put forward, you will be learning to both ask and answer your own questions about the Victorian novel. We'll also attempt to reflect on the research process, looking at our own assumptions about what research is and does as compared with the research practices of Victorian novelists (among others).

Seminar archive and site

Our seminar's public site will feature at minimum our seminar's syllabus and our discussion outlines. Together we will think about any additional elements of our work we may want to make public.

Open classes

Occasionally if relevant we will open our class to interested outside parties. Feel free to invite friends, family, teammates, labmates, housecats, that guy who is always hanging out in the periodicals reading room. More on this in class.

Tools

To start exploring and thinking about your individual and collective process of exploratory research, knowledge organization, and note-taking, we may experiment with a range of technologies. Our goal is to both use digital tools to do humanities work and to use our finely-honed humanities tools to both *critique* and *use* digital technologies.

Long/Senior Honors Study paper

I want us to think about the long paper as a piece that draws together some of the various shorter writing pieces, research skills, and projects you will work on over the course of the semester. The long paper may draw on any aspect of the work you have done in the seminar; it should include an original argument about one of our novels, respond to the existing criticism of that novel, and incorporate original research. A substantial 4-5 page proposal, including a research organization and technology plan, and perhaps the beginning of the paper, is due before March break, with a rough draft due soon after in early April. If you are in Honors, this will become your SHS paper. I would like – but will not require because different students' interests and needs will vary – for this paper to incorporate some significant original research.

Final written and oral exam

During finals period you will take a three-hour written exam; you may use your notes and books. You will then take an oral exam during finals period based on

this exam, your long paper, and the entire semester's readings. This is separate from and in addition to Honors examinations.

Seminar break

Each of you will bring break a few times during the semester. Consult with one another, and be creative! If this will be a financial hardship, please consult me.

Reading and note-taking, technology

We will use various technologies we will use to facilitate various forms of individual and collective note-taking, writing, archiving, and computational text analysis. In addition, we will use laptops intentionally and strategically during some parts of class but not others; more on this during our first meeting. Group leaders will be responsible for thinking about if, how, and when to use technologies like this in class. (If you do not own a laptop, no worries; we can work around this, but do let me know.)

Extra meetings and other specific seminar-related times

Please reserve Friday at 10:30 am to meet with me during the weeks you are in charge of discussion and outline.

This double-credit Honors seminar is a major commitment, and requires a lot of work. I realize this, and look forward to working with you all so that we can mutually make sure that we have the time and space we need to do a good job while also fulfilling our other semester commitments and attempting to be relatively happy people (or as happy as we're disposed to be).

Policies and Advice

Books

The main books you will need to buy are: Anthony Trollope, Barchester Towers. Penguin ISBN-13: 978-0140432039 Anthony Trollope, The Last Chronicle of Barset. Penguin ISBN-13: 978-0140437522 Charles Reade, Hard Cash. Acquire your own copy - no current modern edition. Margaret Oliphant, Miss Marjoribanks. Charles Dickens, Our Mutual Friend. ISBN-13: 978-0199536252 Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Lady Audley's Secret. Oxford World's Classics. 978-0199577033 George Eliot, Middlemarch. Penguin ISBN-13: 978-0141439549

The books are available at the bookstore. You are also welcome to buy the books online or at a different store. Be aware that you need to have your own copy of the specific edition of each of the books listed above. All other texts will be available on Dropbox unless otherwise specified. Please print out, read, mark

up, and bring to class ALL of the texts assigned as required reading for each week (this subject to modification in class).

Grading

- 30% class participation, discussion direction, completion of short informal writing and research projects
- 20% seminar papers (10% each)
- 10% close reading papers
- 10% criticism summaries
- 20% long paper (for Honors students, this will be your SHS paper)
- 10% written and oral exam

Accommodations for disability

I want to work to make sure that everyone in this class has the access to the materials, resources, and support they need in order to learn most effectively. You are always free to talk to me about your own situation. A key Swarthmore resource in this area is the Office of Student Disability Services. Their accommodations policy is here: If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Leslie Hempling in the Office of Student Disability Services (Parrish 113) or email lhempli1@swarthmore.edu to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, she will issue students with documented disabilities a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact her as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, visit the Student Disability Service Website at <http://www.swarthmore.edu/academic-advising-support/welcome-to-student-disability-service>. You are also welcome to contact me [the faculty member] privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged through the Office of Student Disability Services.

Dean's Discretionary Fund and Dean's Office resources for basic needs

If purchasing your textbooks or other materials for this or any other class present a serious financial difficulty for you, you should be aware of the Dean's Discretionary Fund and other resources such as the Course Book Collection in Underhill Library in Lang Music.

The Dean's Office describes the fund this way:

The spirit of this funding is primarily to support emergency circumstances and priority is given to students in the highest financial need tiers. Funding is usually limited to under \$500 and most grants are

under \$300. Please note the Dean's Office may not be able to fulfill all requests.

Examples of eligible non-academic requests include, but are not limited to, expenses associated with emergency medical, dental, vision procedures, unanticipated trips home due to a family emergency, and various fees related to postgraduate opportunities.

The Student Life office at Swarthmore is very committed to making sure that all students having living situations that support their ability to work and live here successfully. If you find that you are having sustained difficulties with your food or housing situation and believe that this may affect your course performance, you should contact your class dean; you are also free to contact me if you wish so that I can help you find the support you need.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. It includes both the direct copying of the words of another person without crediting him or her and paraphrasing the ideas of another person without giving credit. If you have any questions about how to properly cite another person's work, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Attendance and due dates

Because this is a seminar, attendance is essential. Missing seminar (except for cases of illness or true emergencies) is inadvisable. However, if you are really ill, try to contact me ahead of time, but do plan to miss class! *Again, because this is a seminar, deadlines for seminar papers, critical summaries, and outlines are (again, outside of serious emergency situations) firm, firm, firm.* Plan ahead.

Your Own Devices Policy

Because our class is intensively collaborative, I will expect that you will be focused on the texts and on your classmates. If it is your experience that having a screen in front of you can distract you from the work of being in class, please take measures to prevent such self-distraction. (I've used StayFocused; you may like other programs or strategies.)

Acknowledgements

Here is a partial, in-progress list of writing I drew on to create this syllabus, including Nathan Hensley's Victorian Literature and Globalization, Georgetown Spring 2013; Laura Heffernan's Victorian Literature and Objectivity (English 4251, University of North Florida, Spring 2012); Leah Price's Victorian Novel class, Kornbluth's Novel Worlds Mark Algee-Hewitt's 2015 HILT curriculum

This syllabus is necessarily an incomplete document; we will revise and save versions of it as the class progresses. The most up-to-date copy will be available on our vic-sem-2018 organization page on github: https://github.com/vic-sem-2015/syllabus/blob/master/vic_sem_2016.md

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